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Turkey Probes Agca Amid reports of Ties to Rightists, Bulgaria

By Jonathan C. Randal
Washington Post Foreign Service

ANKARA—Mehmet Ali Agca is in the news here again, but not as the would-be assassin of Pope John Paul II just two years ago. The Turkish government has reopened the case of Agca's first victim, the murdered crusading editor Abdi Ipekci.

The government acted after investigative reporter Ugur Mumcu presented a carefully documented picture of cozy cooperation over a number of years among Agca's guerrilla group, the Gray Wolves, the right-wing National Action Party, Turkish smugglers and Bulgarian officials.

These allegations could help shed light on international criminal circles closely related to those being probed in Italy by magistrate Uario Martella in his investigation of the papal shooting. He has charged four Turks besides Agca—all with ties either to the Gray Wolves or Turkish crime circles—and three Bulgarian government employees with complicity in the attack.

Mumcu, a former law professor who studied thousands of documents and interviewed hundreds of sources in his inquiry, said in an interview here that he remains convinced editor Ipekci was killed because he was preparing to investigate smuggling and corruption in Turkish customs.

Bulgaria has been shown to have played a major role in massive smuggling into Turkey that flourished for more than a decade in goods ranging from guns and drugs to coffee, raw materials and spare parts.

Mumcu's investigation thus suggests one way Agca may have been brought into contact with the Bulgarians, through a network of groups interested in protecting their smuggling operations.

Turkish smugglers and extremist political movements have been linked in the past to Bulgaria. Turkish secret service documents assert that Bulgaria was the source of thousands of arms smuggled into Turkey for paramilitary organizations engaged in virtual civil war in 1980-81. The documents suggest that Bulgaria actively sought to destabilize Turkey, the strategic anchor of NATO's eastern flank.

International media and political opinion have considered Bulgarian and possibly Soviet involvement in the papal shooting to be plausible because of the pope's active support for the now-banned Solidarity trade union in the pontiff's native Poland. It also appears reasonable that the Gray Wolves, and hence Agca, could have played a role as "hit men" for the Bulgarians because of the Wolves' links to Turkish political and criminal circles in turn tied to the Bulgarians.

But the evidence of links between these groups still falls short of establishing that the papal shooting was ordered from Bulgaria or Moscow.

Mumcu, however, has uncovered a collection of threads that could link Agca to one of the Turks charged by Martella in the papal shooting. He is Bekir Celenc, alleged by Turkish intelligence documents to have been a major smuggler in arms and other contraband and to have had Soviet Bloc connections.

Based for several years in Geneva, Celenc now is being held by Bulgarian authorities in semidetention in the capital of Sofia. He allegedly was the source of an offer to Agca of about \$1.75 million in West German marks to shoot the pope.

Mumcu also alleged that Celenc worked for Abuzer Ugurlu, now jailed in Turkey on charges of being a top Turkish crime boss. Other Turks in Western Europe also have been linked to Ugurlu, including Omer Mersan. He allegedly provided Agca with a pilfered passport and spoke with him repeatedly on the telephone, once shortly before the assassination attempt in St. Peter's Square.

The Bulgarian government has suggested that western intelligence agencies including the CIA somehow have planted the story of the "Bulgarian connection" in the papal shooting as part of a disinformation campaign against the Soviet Bloc. In a letter to the French daily *Le Matin* in January, the Bulgarian Embassy in Paris referred to allegations that the Wolves may have had links with the CIA.

The letter referred to insistent reports recalled by Mumcu and others of the Wolves' relations with an alleged CIA agent named Ruzi Nazar. A Turcoman born in the Soviet Union, Nazar deserted the Red Army in World War II and fought for the Nazis, according to several reports. He is alleged to have been recruited by the CIA and worked for many years in Turkey. He is said to be living under an alias somewhere in Germany.

Mumcu carried out his journalistic inquiry in an effort to reopen the investigation into who was behind the first shooting in Agca's career as a self-proclaimed "international terrorist," his Feb. 1, 1979, murder of crusading editor Ipekci.

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